

April 16, 1968

Professor Arne Tiselius
Biokemiska Institutionen
Uppsala, Sweden

Dear Professor Tiselius:

May I make a proposal for a Nobel symposium quite separate from the general one outlined in your letter. I suggest the subject "The Prospects of a Major Pandemic". The conference would be intended to explore the status of existing knowledge that enables us to reach any stated level of confidence about the recurrence of a major pandemic as bad as, or conceivably worse than, 1918 influenza.

Personally, I believe this is a subject about which most of us have kept our heads in the sand. Obviously, it is not possible to make any firm predictions on such a subject, but it may be feasible to explore the conditions that help set the scene for such catastrophes. I believe that we are pursuing such a course at the present time with the growing segregation of the world into separate islands of sanitized but unimmunized susceptibles on the one hand, and dense, impoverished, nutritionally weakened populations on the other.

Even if such a conference were unable to reach any very decisive conclusion, that fact alone might help to warn the world that it still faces very serious enemies that are common to all mankind.

Stockholm, apart from being the seat of the Nobel Foundation, would be a very appropriate center for such a conference on scientific as well as political grounds. May I suggest that you discuss this, for example, with Professor Gard, and perhaps other colleagues at Uppsala and Stockholm. If I can be of any specific assistance in helping to further such a conference please let me know at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

Sent xerox from "The Inequality of Man" (Haldane)
" " " Psychiatry and Public Affairs (1966)

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